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BELGIUM

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24 November 1943

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The Honorable Cordell Hull,
The Secretary of State,
Washington 25, D. C.

My dear Mr. Hull:

General Donovan has asked that I send to you the attached report prepared by M. Pierlot, the Prime Minister of Belgium, on the relations during the present war between King Leopold, III of Belgium and the Belgian Government.

May we call to your attention the following paragraph of the memorandum from our New York office transmitting this report to us?

"The fact that this memorandum is in our possession is not known to M. Pierlot or to Ambassador Theunis. It was received against certain assurances on our part as to its use. We have agreed that the document should not be disseminated in whole or in part except of course to General Donovan, solely for such future use as he may consider absolutely necessary. We have further agreed that no references should be made to it in our files."

May we respectfully ask that you have this report used in a manner which is, to the extent possible, consistent with the above conditions?

Yours respectfully,

G. Edward Buxton
Acting Director

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1 French

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OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES
Research and Analysis Branch

R & A No. 1487.2

SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT ON KING LEOPOLD

Description

The evaluation of new intelligence received in recent days on
the position of the King.

7 December 1943

Copy No. 1

SECRETSUPPLEMENT TO REPORT ON KING LEOPOLDSummary

The King's popularity is steadily on the decline and abdication might become a necessity after the war.

Intelligence received in recent days has thrown a new light on the present position of King Leopold as well as on the entire monarchical problem in Belgium. A study of late reports clearly indicates that the King's popularity and prestige are steadily on the decline. The advance of Allied military operations, carrying with it the possibility of an early liberation of the occupied country, is closely connected with the change in popular sentiment.

When the Belgian Army surrendered, the people were convinced that the war was lost. They decided, therefore, to adopt an attitude which would enable them to make the best of a bad situation. This general sentiment accorded perfectly with the King's decision to remain in the country as a prisoner of war. At the time, it seemed to the Belgians that Leopold had done the natural, advisable thing. His action was interpreted by the country as an example of self sacrifice; it constituted, in fact, the moral point d'appui of the people. In the first months of the occupation King Leopold thus became the nation's rallying point.

The intensification of German occupation measures, as well as the growing Allied military operations, finally influenced the opinion of the people. Resistance movements started their activities and helped the people to obtain a clearer conception of the unfavorable position held by their prisoner King. At this crucial moment, when the people began consciously reviewing the entire internal situation, the announcement of the second marriage of King Leopold was made and undoubtedly greatly affected his position. Furthermore, the King's apparent indifference toward the fate of thousands of deported workers infuriated the lower classes, who until then had been among his most ardent admirers. The weak protest made by Leopold at a late date did not alter the impression left by his earlier passive attitude. At the same time the higher political circles voiced their concern over the influential position held by a number of close advisers of the King whose political ideals and ambitions were rightly considered as extremely dangerous to a democratic constitutional monarchy.

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It was realized that the King could not control the ideological opinions of his advisers, but it was believed that he could have taken a clear stand by insisting on the resignation of a number of the most objectionable of them. His trip to Berchtesgaden was also looked upon as an undiplomatic move. This combination of events had such an influence on the people that they have begun to doubt whether Leopold can command the nation's full confidence after the war so as to be able to resume the duties of a constitutional monarch. It is even questionable whether any action undertaken now in an effort to raise his prestige and popularity could be efficacious. It is to be expected that the Belgians will view any such action as comparable to the efforts made of late by a number of persons who are now adopting for the first time since the invasion a stronger stand against the occupying authorities.

A study of King Leopold's present position raises immediately the question of abdication. Though known as an ambitious person, it should be remembered that Leopold, who has made several unexpected decisions, might even abdicate of his own free will. Moreover, it is possible that the Belgians might insist on the abdication of King Leopold. In both cases the question of succession has to be solved. Leopold's only brother, Prince Charles, is not considered fit to take over the heavy responsibility of heading the state. Prince Baudouin, the nine year old heir to the throne, could only reign under a Regency until the time of his majority. It is doubtful whether there is any person possessing both the qualification and the popularity necessary to assume the position of Regent.

It is believed that the officials of the government in exile agree with the people in occupied Belgium that a continuation of a status of constitutional monarchy is essential to the welfare of the country. The republican sentiment, present in some Walloon circles, does not appeal to the people at large.

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X Langer, King
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OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES

INTEROFFICE MEMO

DATE: 4 November 1943

TO: General William J. Donovan
FROM: William L. Langer
SUBJECT: Evaluation of Memorandum on King Leopold's Advisers

In response to your request, I am attaching herewith an evaluation of the memorandum on King Leopold's advisers supported by additional information.

William L. Langer
William L. Langer
Director, Branch of
Research and Analysis

Attachment

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B. Ogden 12-12-43
x Leopold, King
x Advisers

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OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES
Research and Analysis Branch

R & A No. 1467

MEMORANDUM ON KING LEOPOLD'S ADVISERS

Description

Evaluation of a London report on the advisers of King Leopold,
supported by additional information.

29 October 1943

Copy No. 1

SECRET**MEMORANDUM ON KING LEOPOLD'S ADVISERS****Summary**

The role of the present advisers of King Leopold and its effect upon the importance of the King's position in Belgium's post-war political structure.

I. Evaluation

The information contained in the report on King Leopold's advisers, prepared in H and A London by David Pridmore, corresponds with intelligence received from other reliable sources. Attached herewith are additional details on some of the personalities cited in the basic memorandum. The biographical data given in these reports will perhaps further be clarified by the following information.

King Leopold's position is of cardinal importance in the framework of Belgium's post-war reconstruction. Private reports obtained from Belgians who recently escaped from the occupied country confirm the opinion, however, that the King's prestige has been adversely affected, especially since his second marriage. Though it is difficult to evaluate the sentiments of an entire population, it nevertheless is clear that a group of Belgians are thinking --- perhaps for the first time since their country's independence --- of establishing a Belgian republic after the war.

Prior to the war, only a fraction of communists and communist-Flemish Nationalists nursed anti-monarchist sentiments. At

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present, however, there is evidence that a republican tendency is gaining strength among a small group who previously were sincere Royalists. The bulk of the people, originally royalist, now waver in their attitude toward the monarchy as a direct result of the King's lack of personal prestige.

King Leopold, through a constitutional monarch, often used his position to intervene in political issues. His ardent anti-French feeling and his interest in the Flemish problem unquestionably influenced Belgium's pre-war foreign policy. Belgian government circles in London feel that the King ought to dismiss a member of his personal advisers upon the liberation of the country.

Moreover, these Belgian officials say that Leopold's authority should in the future be strictly curtailed. Among the advisers whose influence is considered objectionable are:

- 1) General van Overstraten
- 2) Count Capelle
- 3) Baron Pierre van Zuylen.

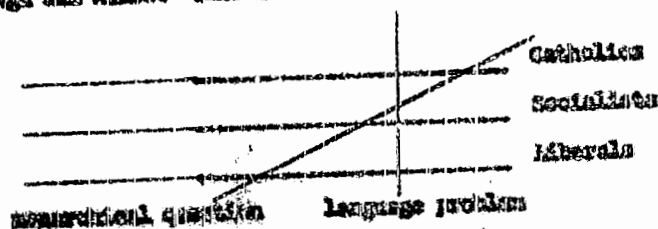
The people of Belgium, however, are unaware of the nature of the influence exercised on the King by these persons. Therefore, the removal of this influence will not substantially raise King Leopold's prestige.

If the Allies plan an invasion of Belgium, then it becomes highly desirable to obtain the full support of her entire population.

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This unification will be difficult to obtain while so many domestic issues divide the people. Some of these issues are fundamental, such as the language problem and the normal division along party lines. The position of the King has now further complicated the entire Belgian situation, by cutting diagonally through all lines. This is illustrated by the following diagram:



During the present era, it was only the King who at the same time stood above all party politics and language problems.

It is doubtful whether there is any Belgian political figure able to bridge all the problems, and thus have the power to achieve the unity of all Belgians. This could be done by the King only.

The Belgians at least feel that the question of the monarchy's future is for their own solution. Allied intervention, if necessary, should be skillfully concealed.

If a plan could be worked out which would place King Leopold at the head of a free Belgian army, participating in the liberation of the homeland, then the entire monarchical problem, which is largely based upon principle of prestige, would be solved.

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SECRETIII. Additional InformationQueen Elizabeth

Queen Elizabeth who arrived here from the occupied homeland, claims to be an pro-German, although no specific proof has as yet been submitted to support this accusation. It is known, however, that Queen Elizabeth, on various occasions, has shown an interest in the fate of the Belgians seen.

General Overstraten

The two following reports have previously been submitted:

1) "He is the chief military adviser of the King, the chief of the Staff College, and reputed to be an excellent and intelligent tactician. He was always very impressed by the military strength of Germany and has had a great deal of influence on the military and foreign policy of the King. Many consider his influence dangerous, and the General is accused of egging the King on towards personal power.

General van Overstraten advised capitulation on May 28th. He is said to have known the true state of the French army and the state of the morale of the British Army and the military preparations of the Germans. He is reported to have said that the French and British could not stand up to the Germans.

Since the capitulation General van Overstraten has continued to exercise a dominant influence on the attitude of the King and has encouraged collaboration and the so-called clandestine

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regiment movement, "La Belgique Loyale," which is pro-Belgian-
 monarchist and pro-Flemish and controlled by Count Xavier de Smet,
 a Belgian ex-convict. Evidence of the present effect of his in-
 fluence is contradictory."

2) "In 1909 Overstraten organized the Royal Corps of
 expedition for King Albert, by whom he was held in great favor.
 Overstraten was then an aggressive and gifted young man, with
 the rank of Major. He later on became Leopold's adviser on
 military affairs; the prohibition of staff liaison with the
 British and French in the days prior to January 1940, as well
 as the independent policy in 1936, are generally held to be his
 responsibility. While no definite connection with the British
 has been traced to him, it is thought that he has several times
 considered attempting a coup d'etat, and that he tried without
 success to induce the King to act in an arbitrary manner. Over-
 straten has a temperamental tendency toward Fascist ideas."

Count Capelle

The other reports confirm the information supplied by
 Mr. David S. Henry. These reports give the following additional
 details.

1) Count Capelle is the King's Secretary. He has repre-
 sented the King on several occasions, for instance, after the
 landing of Anwerp.

"Count Capelle was the author of a circular sent, at

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the end of 1940, from Belgium's legation in Switzerland to all Ambassadors and Ministers abroad, and which contained a series of instructions of a decidedly collaborationist tendency.

He is aware, the people, who, until a short time ago, were unanimously saying that a compromise peace would be the best solution of the conflict from the Belgian point of view. More recently, such people substituted a "discussion peace" for a "compromise."

- 2) Belgian (of recent nobility, son of a high official in the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Political Opinions:

Belgium (notionally) very much under German influence and infiltration of Germany in Western Europe, has shown marked sympathies for the "New Order."

Activities in the Field:

Has no direct influence on the King; however, through King and parliament work he has managed to exercise an indirect influence on Leopold.

Comments: In 1941-42 Capelle firmly believed in the victory of the Nazis. It is a well established fact that he held frequent conversations with Paul Colson, Robert Beaulieu, Pierre Laro and other well-known collaborationists. One of these collaborationists interpreted Capelle's own private opinions and directions as coming directly from the King. It is also well-known that he approved the publication of the pro-Nazi newspaper "Les Belges libres." However, other facts could be cited to indicate the above statements.

First Entry:

During the war extremely active politician who undoubtedly played a leading role in the Belgian resistance. Additional biographical information

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follows:

"Albert Devise is a Minister of State (Privy Counsellors), ex-minister (ministry of National Defense), ex-President of the Belgian Bar, and since many years, Liberal M.P. of Brussels.

"He is the Chief of the Liberal Party; of Liberal Conservative views, with a tendency towards authoritarianism. He is also an important business lawyer with stakes in France. He is pro-French and anti-German.

"In his capacity of Minister of National Defense he organized the system of Belgian fortifications along the Eastern frontier.

"Devise was one of the barristers who gave a ruling on the consequences involved by the capitulation.

"He is known to be very devoted to the Royal Family etc. It is thought that he had exercised a moderating influence on the anti-Allies elements at the royal court.

"Very unpopular in Flemish and democratic circles, he is said to be keeping out of political life, now, in order to try to impose an authoritarian regime after the war."

Report of Fardcourt

"An additional information it could be stated a private report revealed that the King was preparing a resolution of the Constitution along radical lines, in the event of an Allied victory, and that Louis de Fardcourt was advising him in the matter.

In politics, de Fardcourt is Catholic, and certain people of the Right Wing in Belgium, are reported to have mentioned him as a possible Prime Minister after the war.

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Belgium 12/25
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES

SECRET
Leopold
Belgium

INTEROFFICE MEMO

TO: General Donovan
FROM: William L. Langer
SUBJECT: Memorandum on King Leopold's Advisers

DATE: 22 October 1943

In response to your request of October 20
I am attaching hereto a copy of the memorandum
from Mr. David Pinkney on King Leopold's advisers.

William L. Langer
William L. Langer
Director, Branch of
Research and Analysis

Attachment

SECRETOFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES
AMERICAN EMBASSY

London

September 24, 1943

BY AIR POUCH

To: Dr. William L. Langer
 Attention: Henry B. Hill
 Subject: King Leopold's advisers

The information in the attached memorandum was obtained by a member of S.O., London, from a Belgian who is close to the members of the Belgian Government here and whom my source considers to be very well-informed and reliable. The S.O. man did warn me, however, that this Belgian is a very cautious man and that he is reluctant to make unfavorable statements about influential persons unless he has certain substantiation; consequently, his description of Leopold's entourage makes the individuals appear as favorably as possible.

My source in S.O., who is himself very well-informed on Belgium and highly thought of here, made some important suggestions on the problem of Leopold's advisers. He declared that any statement about them and their influence should be qualified by the observation that the King is a headstrong and stubborn person; he is not greatly influenced in a direct manner by anyone. Another of the King's personal characteristics, his sensitivity and his proneness to being easily hurt, make it difficult at any time to say precisely who his most influential advisers are. The persons closest to him vary with changes in his personal feelings. At this particular time it is even more difficult to single out the most influential men around him because the political situation is so unsettled; the King may be expected to change his advisers to suit any new trend of events which he deems important.

s/ David Pinkney

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SECRETR&A LONDON
22.9.43**SUBJECT:** Notes on persons at present in the entourage of King Leopold of Belgium**SOURCE:** Belgian source through S.O., London.**DATE:** 21 September 1943.QUEEN ELIZABETH

Much maligned by the French before Belgium's entry into the war - was accused of being strongly pro-German. There is no evidence to corroborate this accusation. She has in all circumstances shown a great patriotic spirit, and although Queen Astrid became extremely popular, Queen Elizabeth remained idolized by the soldiers of the last war, who remembered her untiring devotion to them. She has always shown great interest in social enterprises and all possibilities of the people's welfare were of interest to her. She greatly encouraged all enterprises which opened new prospects to the lower classes on the way of science and the arts.

VAN OVERSTRAETEN

Authoritarian tendencies; considered as having exercised a strong influence on the King. It is considered he held a theory of Belgium's foreign policy which was not in keeping with the Government's views. After Belgium's surrender he was of opinion that the war was over as far as his country was concerned and that to make the best of a bad job the only possibility was that of collaboration with the Germans and to recognise the fact of Germany's supremacy in Europe. In home politics he was known to be in favour of a very strong concentration of power in the King's hands, with a Government of military administrators. He had a small following among young rightists. He was, however, not in sympathy with the Rexistists.

KING'S WIFE

By her education inclined to sympathy towards England. She belongs to a family of very modest origin and will not be very readily accepted by the Belgian nobility. By the force of circumstances she will be pro-democratically inclined.

VISCOUNT JACQUES DAVIGNON

Was Ambassador in Berlin in 1940 when the war broke out.

He was always convinced of the German danger, but hoped that a careful policy might have kept Belgium out of the war. If war was to come he saw no other way than a fierce resistance. Held in high esteem by the King, he was often consulted by him in pre-war days. After the collapse of France, he believed England would go

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the same way. But he is not anti-British. His ambition was to be Ambassador in London and but for the war he would most certainly have been. He is a man of high moral standard and a great loyalty. Agent of a policy which has failed he has been among those who believed the only salvation for the country was in collaboration. But he has no sympathy for the Germans. Many people, however, consider him wrongly, as responsible for the policy of independence and neutrality.

HENRI DE MAN

Has discredited himself completely and is considered by most people as a traitor. Already before the war his short popularity, due to the formulating of a "New Deal" policy, had been outlived.

HENRI BAELS

- Several times Christian Democrat, Minister in pre-war years. Is a man without any political influence or backing. He is a political gambler who, as father-in-law to the King must consider his political career ended. As Governor of the Province of Bruges, where his absence made him unpopular, he has already left parliamentary life.

BREON CAPELLE

Is considered to have been since the invasion one of the worst counselors of the King. He appears to have been entirely favourable to collaboration with the Germans, on the consideration that there was no other salvation for Belgium, as the French and British guarantors had failed to substantiate their pledges in any successful way.

ALBERT DEVEZE

Liberal statesman who had always been pro-French and anti-German. After the defeat, he was of opinion that reconstruction was necessary and made tentative moves of conciliation with the Germans. The greatest service was rendered to him by the Rexists, who denounced him as of Jewish origin, and who recalled that the Flemings hate him.

MAURICE LIPPENS

Flemish liberal; wealthy banker. He has been very much in the same position as Devoze. He toyed with the idea of forming a new Government in Brussels. But he also was denounced by the Rexists as a politician serving financial interests and, although Flemish, not acceptable to the more advanced Flemings of Germanic tendencies.

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SECRETHAYOIT DE TERNICOURT

Chief Justice. A man of high integrity, profound faith and great intelligence; made a rapid career in the Law courts. He was the King's best counselor and informed him fully on his rights after the surrender, showing how under the constitution he was in a state of incapacity and could not, without breaking his pledged oath, form a new Government in Brussels, should such a possibility ever be considered.

COL. KIENWITZ

Liaison officer between Laeken Castle and the German authorities. He is unpopular amongst the people. Rightly or wrongly they assert that he was instrumental in the King's marriage, working on German instructions to bring it about in order that the King's popularity might be diminished.

BARON PIERRE van ZUYLEN

Accepted from the Germans a nomination as Secretary General to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but resigned very soon after when realized that the enemy wished to use him as a tool. His acceptance had influenced several younger men of his department, but, unhappily his resignation did not have the same effect. He has stayed in contact with the higher officials of his department, but spends most of his time administering his fortune, and living on the income of his income.

ALBERT EDOUARD JANSSEN

Banker and former Finance Minister in a Catholic Government. Professor at the University of Louvain. Has played a great part in relief organizations and is one of the confidants of Cardinal Van Roey. No outstanding political liability, but excellent financial expert, who worked on the restoration of Austrian finances after the last war and is well known in the financial circles of the League of Nations.

EDGARD DE BRUYNE

Catholic Fleming, Professor at the University of Ghent, and Senator. One of the soundest political elements - with great influence and commanding respect. Will certainly be one of the Catholic leaders of the country.

TONY HERBIERT

Belonged in his University days (1924) to the more extreme Flemish movement. Since that time, however, he has taken a more sober political line and appears to be a man whose influence in the Flemish part of the country will be considerable. His attitude is entirely patriotic.

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